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ABSTRACT

Designed to assist community college administrators and faculty in enhancing vocational education programs and services, this resource package on rural college programs contains information about successful program strategies and ideas currently in use in vocational education programs at rural schools within the California Community Colleges (CCC). The opening section of the report reviews institutional characteristics and administrative considerations unique to rural colleges and lists advantages of the rural college setting frequently cited in student recruitment efforts. This section also describes strategies employed to respond to smaller student populations and a limited industrial base, reviewing specific cooperative partnerships between the CCC and local industry; describes partnerships among neighboring campuses; and discusses linking programs to the local economy. Next, the report provides case studies on the following four programs at rural colleges in the CCC: (1) the Natural Resources and Environmental Majors program at Feather River College; (2) the Lake Tahoe Hospitality Program at Lake Tahoe Community College; (3) the Steam Power Operations Technology Program at Lassen Community College; and (4) the Economic Development Summits at Mendocino College. The final section of the report lists specific steps in identifying local and regional labor market needs and describes the CCC's Labor Market Information and Student Follow-up System, developed to assist the colleges perform labor market analyses. A list of program contact people is included. (PAA)

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Rural Programs

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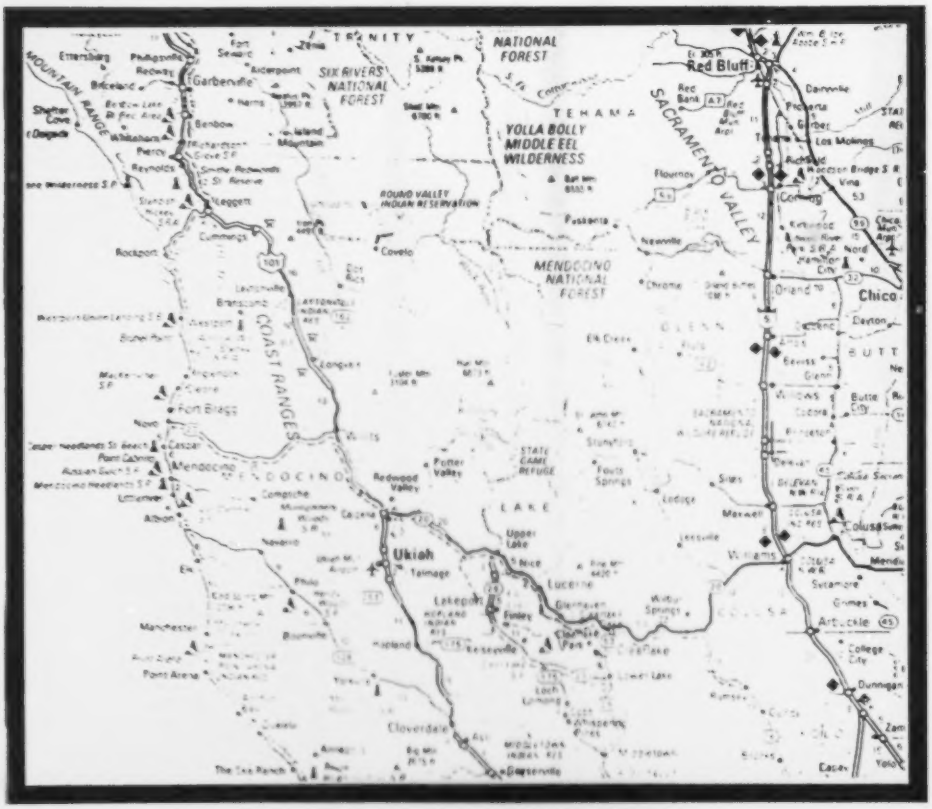

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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESOURCE PACKAGE

Rural Programs

Prepared for the
Chancellor's Office of the
California Community Colleges

Prepared by the
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1993

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESOURCE PACKAGES (VERPs)

Vocational Education Resource Packages (VERPs) are made available to the California Community Colleges through a special project grant. VERPs are designed to assist community college administrators and faculty in enhancing vocational education programs and services, especially those serving special population students.

Each VERP contains information about successful program strategies and ideas currently in use in vocational education programs at the California Community Colleges. VERPs enable the dissemination of various program approaches to interested colleges, and provide resource materials to improve or develop programs which respond to local needs.

The VERPs are organized along thematic lines based on the needs of California Community Colleges. This VERP provides information on rural programs.

VERP Titles	
Industry-Education Partnerships	Partnerships with the Public Sector
School-to-Work Transitions	Multi-media Instruction
Trends in Gender Equity	Promising Practices
Career Development	Staff Development
Rural Programs	Grant Writing

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The special project grant that enabled the development and dissemination of the VERPs also provided for technical assistance. **Technical assistance services and workshops are available free of charge through June 1993.** The workshops and technical assistance will be provided by community college faculty and other resource people with relevant experience and know-how to share. Should your college wish to have an on-site workshop, or should you desire additional information, please contact:

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BACKGROUND

Rural community colleges are faced with a number of unique challenges. Economic and demographic factors unique to the rural sector require that community colleges in rural areas adapt to situations and address needs which are either less pronounced or non-existent for more urban campuses. It is common for community colleges in rural communities to face many or all of the following challenges:

- A local economy which provides fewer jobs, a lower wage rate, a greater proportion of dislocated workers, and higher unemployment levels.

- A smaller, limited community industrial base. Furthermore, existing industry is often more spread out geographically. The combination of these factors make for increased difficulty in placing students in work experience education, internships, and career employment.

- A smaller student population. A lower Full-Time Equivalency Student (FTES) level results in less funding for the rural campuses, and increased difficulty in running a cost-effective program.

- A smaller student population requires that a more limited curriculum be taught. New programs and courses will only succeed if there are enough students to fill them.

- Limited funding often requires that rural campuses employ a lower percentage of full-time faculty. Maintaining consistent course curriculums and academic programs, therefore, often becomes more difficult.

- The relatively isolated rural surroundings often make highly qualified professional staff more difficult to recruit and retain. At many rural campuses it is also increasingly difficult to provide students with an ethnically and culturally diverse faculty, and range of experiences.

- More isolated surroundings also make travel more difficult. Distant conferences may be financially or temporally prohibitive for college faculty.

Rural community college program coordinators have made efforts to develop programs which take into account the challenges listed above. Developing a program which both remains economically viable on the rural campus and also addresses the needs of the local population and economy often requires creativity, and sensitivity to local industry trends. Recent research among rural community college instructors and administrators yielded numerous strategies and approaches to student recruitment and retention at the rural campuses, as well as means to develop and perpetuate effective programs in the rural sector. Their responses to the challenges of their unique situations follow.

Advantages of the Rural Community Colleges.

Many of the challenges faced by the rural community colleges have already been enumerated. Nonetheless, numerous community college administrators and instructors actively recruit students to campus by stressing the benefits of the rural colleges and the attractions of the rural region. Depending upon the location of a rural campus, many or all of the following favorable rural qualities may be used to recruit students to campus:

- The smaller rural campuses enjoy more peaceful surroundings, and a small-town feel. The negative elements of a large city, such as smog, traffic, noise, high crime rates, and congestion are not factors in the rural community.

- The cost of living is lower in rural areas.

- Rural community colleges feature smaller classes, which provide more individualized attention to students. Because student success is often more of a priority at the rural campuses, they frequently produce students with higher outcome measures and pass rates on standardized exams, and greater employer satisfaction in the world of work.

- Support services such as financial aid, counselling, tutoring, etc. are not overcrowded, and so are more easily accessible to students.

- Most classes are not closed. Students are more likely to be able to get the classes they need to finish their programs on schedule.

- Although rural community colleges are generally faced with a smaller industrial base, the types of business and industry which campuses in rural areas do access often differs from those of urban centers. Rural campuses are therefore at an advantage over urban campuses with respect fields of study which are particularly suited to the rural campus' environment. For example, students at rural campuses which offer instruction in agricultural sciences or forestry may gain valuable hands-on work experience and practical exposure to those fields, which urban campuses, due to their environment and demographics factors, cannot offer.

- A number of rural community colleges provide residence halls, attracting students who do not wish to attend a commuter school, and allowing students to more fully immerse themselves into the college environment.

- Smaller campuses often have faster turnaround; they can respond more quickly to the needs of industry.

Responding to Smaller Student Populations

In addition to stressing the benefits of the rural campus communities, other strategies assist rural college instructors and administrators to meet the challenge of smaller student populations.

- Rural community colleges may avoid simultaneously offering sections of classes which compete for the same students.

- Where student demand for specific courses is low, two or more similar courses in the same discipline may be joined to form one comprehensive course, in order to serve as many students as possible.

- Rural community colleges which enjoy a unique environmental setting may develop magnet programs focusing upon their unique resources. Such programs serve to draw students out of the urban areas to become resident students in rural regions.

- The smaller rural student population is being addressed by College of the Redwoods, which has a main campus in Eureka, and outlying satellite campuses in Crescent City and Fort Bragg. For certain courses, health occupations students at the satellite campuses travel to the Eureka campus for a large lecture course, while lab sections are offered at the outlying campus sites.

- At Mendocino College, administrators recognized that students are frequently hesitant to come to a small campus for fear that, due to limited student populations, desired courses toward their degree will not be offered. In response to this, Mendocino college created a guaranteed two-year sequence of classes for every certificate and degree program. So long as the courses are taken in sequence, and a continuing student who has declared a major in that field is enrolled, the courses would be offered. Mendocino has not encountered a problem with this approach--they have kept their ADA up, because such an approach attracts students who otherwise might not attend for fear of courses toward a degree being canceled.

Responding to a Limited Industrial Base

Rural campuses faced with a smaller, limited community industrial base have responded by increasing their flexibility with work experience providers. For example, hospitals in rural areas tend to be smaller, and do not provide the same breadth of experience as do hospitals in urban areas. In response to this, the Health Occupations Department at College of the Redwoods goes beyond the traditional method of providing work experience to students in a hospital setting alone. Instead, students are sent to many places for work experience other than hospitals, including rehabilitation centers, homecare, and out-patient facilities. This strategy provides a variety of work experiences to students and makes for a more flexible employee upon graduation.

Even when industry contacts are limited, efforts to develop cooperative partnerships with existing industry may be pursued. Examples abound

of partnerships with industry in rural areas, through which industry supplies equipment, funding for programs, and input into curriculum in exchange for training in specific job skills. When a limited community industrial base makes it difficult to develop programs expressly for the local community, rural community colleges define their labor market on regional, rather than simply a local, level, and develop programs accordingly. Because colleges in rural areas are frequently widely dispersed, such an approach need not create a problem of overlap or competition with other campuses.

- An agricultural economy creates a demand for competent truck drivers in the surroundings of Mendocino College. Administrators at the college responded by forming a partnership with Lyly and Sons trucking, in which Mendocino college offers courses and work experience for credit which prepares students to take the California Commercial Class A Licensing Exam and driving test, and Lyly and Sons provides behind-the-wheel training. The cooperative arrangement allows for students to be trained for a future in truck driving at a fraction of the cost for private training. Placement out of the four-month program has been high.

- A cooperative arrangement between Shasta College, Caterpillar Corporation, and Peterson Tractor through which course curriculum is tailored in specific programs to meet the need of Caterpillar and Peterson employees resulted in a grant of $25,000 from Caterpillar.

- The oil industry provides a significant fraction of the regional economy surrounding Taft College. In 1982 the Westside Energy Services Training and Education Center, Inc. (WESTEC) was founded to operate in cooperation with Taft College, providing fundamental industrial training and educational services to oil industry personnel. WESTEC is a nonprofit (501C(3)) public benefit corporation whose mission is "to cooperate with industry to determine training requirements, establish and carry out programs that meet the identified needs, acquire resources to conduct these programs effectively, produce and provide training materials, and conduct its activities in cooperation with those of Taft College."[1]

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[1]Information taken from "WESTEC Fact Sheet"

Shasta College

Other examples of cooperative partnerships with existing industry are provided by Shasta College. Personnel of the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources worked closely with local advisory committee members to pursue one-on-one interactions with representatives of several public and private agencies. The goal of these interactions was to make Shasta College staff aware of the exact training that each community organization and agency requires in preparation for employment. As a consequence, a number of work experience programs were established with local agencies.

- The Department of Fish and Game funds a willow cutting program (providing an egg-laying habitat for warm water fish species) in which Shasta College Natural Resources students are contracted to raise a minimum of 5000 willow cuttings per year for three years.

- A second program with the Department of Fish and Game and the Mule Deer Foundation studies the effects of habitat versus genetic influences in male deer growth. The program is fully funded by the Mule Deer foundation.

- Natural Resources students participate with CALTRANS in a two-year stream bank mitigation project, by which stream banks are re-vegetated. CALTRANS provides equipment, and the program has led to career placement of a number of Shasta College students with CALTRANS.

Partnerships with Neighboring Campuses

Rural community colleges may attempt to develop partnerships with other local campuses. Larger campuses, or campuses which have already developed a specific program can provide valuable information, curriculum, resources, or staff to help a rural community college initiate a similar program, or to supplement existing curriculum at the rural community college. Many rural college administrators suggest more of a consortium approach to education which pools the resources of all the campuses in a given region:

- Santa Rosa College, Shasta College, and College of the Redwoods recently received a combination grant by which new equipment will be rotated among the three colleges.

- Lake Tahoe Community College is currently seeking to form a collaborative arrangement with Sacramento City College, which has a successful nursing program. The campuses would share faculty, students, and resources in an outreach effort to the rural campus' region, which would not otherwise have access to a nursing program.
- College of the Redwoods recently secured an articulation grant by which a transfer program with Humboldt State University (a four year institution) was formed.

Linking Programs Closely to the Local Economy

Rural community college administrators and educators commonly suggested a significant means by which to address the specific needs and challenges of their context: the development of programs which are directly linked to the specific labor market needs of the surrounding rural economy.

The most relevant and viable community college programs tap into the specific labor market and industry needs of the college's own context. Such programs are not only likely produce students who are readily transitioned into work, but also encourage local business and industry to provide the funding and equipment necessary for the continuation of the program.

In the rural economy, where the existence of such alternative funding is often essential to a program's survival, diligent and creative efforts should be made to link programs very closely to the needs of business and industry. Such an effort may require not only close work with active advisory committees to stay very attentive to the needs of industry, but also statewide networking with other academic and economic institutions, and active research by college officials into emerging local, regional, and statewide economic trends. Three case studies follow which illustrate programs which successfully link to the local economy.

CASE STUDIES

Natural Resources and Environmental Majors
Feather River College

Feather River College is located in the heavily wooded northern Sierra mountains. The campus provides a natural laboratory to students of the environment and natural resources. As a consequence, Feather River college offers a number of majors in programs which are ideally suited to the surrounding environment:

- The **Forestry Technician** major focuses upon the establishment, care, and management of trees as a renewable resource, and upon the management of forests for lumber production. Plumas National forest provides a natural laboratory for such study, hands on training and experience, and opportunities for seasonal employment.

- The **Wildlife Technician** manages animal and fish populations, maintaining wildlife populations at levels compatible to the habitat. The 160 acre campus is a game reserve, and hosts its own deer herd. Furthermore, Feather River College is the only campus in California with its own on-campus Wild Trout Fish Hatchery. Plumas National Forest surrounds the campus, teeming with wildlife.

- The **Recreation Leadership** major gives personal experience and the ability to instruct others in backpacking, cross-country skiing, white water rafting, climbing and rappeling, snowshoeing, wilderness survival, search and rescue, camping. Again, the surrounding environment is ideally suited to such a major.

- The **Pack Station and Stable Operations** major is the only program of its kind in United States, training horsemanship professionals. Feather River College hosts an equine center on campus, and Plumas National Forest includes natural forest trails for horsemanship.

- The **Watershed Management Technician** major instructs students in managing water resources and preventing the pollution of them. Again, the campus provides a natural laboratory, as many local water management concerns and innovative stream restoration projects operate in the area, providing hands on experience and employment opportunities. Much of one's work is done outdoors, observing.

According to a Feather River College recruiter, student interest in these programs has been excellent since their inception, and with the increased concern for the environment in recent years, demand for such courses has been improving. The rural program is successful because the environment makes for hands-on job skills training which cannot be matched elsewhere. Such magnet programs serve to draw students out of the urban areas to become resident students in rural regions.

Lake Tahoe Hospitality Program
Lake Tahoe Community College

Tourism is of primary significance in the rural economy of the Lake Tahoe area. In this tourist-based rural economy, the success or failure of business and industry, as well as that of Lake Tahoe Community College, are all connected in one way or another to the visitor's dollar. Consequently, showing hospitality to the customer is of special significance to the labor force of the region.

The Lake Tahoe Visitor's Authority was established to promote tourism on the South shore of Lake Tahoe, and is supported by local business and industry. The Visitor's Authority, the South Lake Tahoe Chamber of Commerce, and local businesses together supported the development of a program which would provide hospitality training for employees. In 1991 these organizations contracted with Lake Tahoe Community College to provide the educational component of a hospitality program. In Fall 1991 the college began offering a series of short-term intensive courses for employee training and staff development for front-line hotel and service industry employees. The courses assist local business in that they provide employee training and staff development to currently operating businesses. The courses also assist the community college student to gain marketable skills in customer relations and the personal qualities necessary to gain and keep employment in the hospitality

industry. Each of the five courses focuses upon a different aspect of customer service:

- **"Tourist Orientation and Customer Service"** provides an introduction to the Lake Tahoe area, and teaches to students principles of effective communication, giving clear directions, and helping customers to make decisions.

- **"Dealing with the Difficult Customer"** teaches students to effectively deal with angry, or upset customers in various work situations.

- **"Time Management on the Job"** instructs students in the effective use and control of time, goal setting, planning, and working efficiently.

- **"Stress Management on the Job"** defines stress for students, helps them to identify and deal with causes of stress in the workplace, and teaches the relationship between stress and health.

- **"Serving the International Guest"** helps students to understand the cultural difference and service expectations of other cultures. The current focus is upon the Japanese culture.

In just over one year, over 1300 students and industry employees have taken the Lake Tahoe Hospitality Program courses. The courses are offered for credit, but are not applicable to a specific degree at the college. A pool of instructors from sectors of local industry work as adjunct faculty at the college, providing hospitality training.

Steam Power Operations Technology Program
Lassen Community College

Timber has been a principal industry in the rural region surrounding Lassen Community College. Many of the timber mills in the local surroundings, as well as elsewhere in the nation, operate on steam power. In addition, the region is spotted with numerous independent powerplant energy producers, which sell their power to Pacific Gas & Electric--twelve such plants are located within eighty miles of Lassen Community College.

The cold winter climate results in very high electrical and heating costs in the region. As a consequence, a 1.5 Megawatt waste energy cogeneration facility, completed in 1983, was built on the Lassen Community College campus. It functions by burning garbage and medical waste to produce electricity, generating power for the campus and for a portion of the city. Administrators also conceived that the energy cogeneration plant would serve as the site for an educational and training facility. Thus, the Steam Power Operations Technology (SPOT) program was initiated, with the first students enrolling in 1983. Although the College's cogeneration facility is currently non-operational due to financial reasons, the educational component of the SPOT program continues.

The SPOT program trains 25 to 30 students each year as powerplant operators and maintenance people for work in steam powerplants in the region, as well as in many states throughout the country. The powerplant is a complex mix of many technologies, and students take courses in high voltage electricity, chemistry, combustion and emission control, controls, equipment, and instruments in a steam power plant, as well as courses on technical language to read mechanical and electrical drawings, maintenance, and safety in the powerplant. Theory comes before practice, but the program concludes with 357 hours (equivalent to two terms) of internship in an operational steam powerplant within or outside the district. Many of these internships ultimately result in employment.

The program requires two years to complete with an Associate of Science degree. However, in response to the high unemployment in the region, Lassen offers SPOT as a one year certificate program, which excludes general education, but includes the complete classroom theory and lab component, and a full internship over the summer. Placement of students is handled by the department itself, and the program has one of the highest placement rates at Lassen College, steadily placing over 85 percent of graduates in local plants and in powerplants as distant as Washington state, Alaska, Michigan, Oklahoma, and Imperial County. Program directors attribute the high placement rate to several factors:

- The program is unique--Lassen is the only campus in the state with such a program and curriculum.

- The program is job-specific--it feeds directly into the needs of the surrounding labor market.

- The program is controlled by a very active advisory committee including industry representatives from both local and national companies. The advisory committee helps to fashion the curriculum, to directly serve the needs of industry.

Mendocino College Economic Development Summits

Mendocino College has become a key player in Mendocino County's economic development plans. Through workshops in the community, the college facilitated the development of plans and priorities that have been adopted county-wide.

The college's involvement began with a community forum on the changing economics of the timber industry, employment trends on the North Coast, economic development, the environment, and retraining/placing unemployed workers. More than 100 people attended. This one-day meeting included vocational educators, career counselors, job developers and business and industry. In bringing together diverse individuals to talk about economic issues, the college focused on finding mutually agreeable strategies to meet needs.

The Economic Development Summits grew out of the recognition at the initial forum that labor market needs, economic issues, and community values were linked concerns that required attention. The College hosted the first Summit in spring 1992. Government, industry and other educational entities joined to draft a vision statement, identify key values, and form working committees. The community planning that took place focused on linking social issues with economic development. Two additional Summits were held in 1992.

Both Mendocino College staff and the consultants with which they worked feel that the facilitation process for the Summits was the key to their success. The Summit process enabled the community to get beyond its disagreements, focusing instead on the areas in which consensus could be achieved. Management consultants with experience working with the timber industry assisted in the process. They designed the model for the Summit, trained the facilitators, and coached them through the process.

The County accepted the written proceedings of the first Summit as official community input to the County's economic development process,

and recognized the Summit Committee chairs as consultants to the County process. The County has since endorsed the College's Summit process as the ongoing mechanism for input into the Economic Development Plan.

The model used by Mendocino College may be valuable for other colleges, particularly those in rural areas, wishing to initiate a dialogue about local economic needs.

IDENTIFYING LOCAL AND REGIONAL LABOR MARKET NEEDS

As the above case studies illustrate, the most successful programs are often those which directly link to the labor market needs of the surrounding rural economy. Rural program planners repeatedly stressed the importance of quality over quantity in the rural areas, the necessity of narrowing one's focus on vocational programs, and of concentrating one's attention precisely on labor market demand.

Effective means of identifying the labor market needs of one's own region is therefore crucial to the process of developing programs which will be relevant to the local economy. Active collaboration with business and industry advisory committees are a primary means of gaining input into the needs of the community. Certain key regional industries are apparent for most colleges. Others may be more difficult to readily identify. In any case, the labor market is dynamic, and if vocational programs are to consistently result in jobs for students it is important to continually research and review trends in the regional labor market to stay abreast of growing and declining industries.

Forecasting local demand for certain occupations involves both an exploratory stage and an examination of empirical occupational projections. During the exploratory stage, local and regional industry and occupational trends are reviewed in order to compile an initial planning list of occupations to investigate. The review of overall industry and occupational trends allows program planners to build a "foundation" of knowledge regarding local business trends, technological changes which affect employment, and newly emerging careers. Subsequent steps involve the examination of numerical data related to specific occupations. A summary of the steps involved in forecasting labor market demand are outlined below:

STEP 1	Review industry and occupational trends.
STEP 2	Compile an initial planning list of occupations for potential programs.
STEP 3	Establish a criteria for occupations. This criteria will be used to refine the planning list.

STEP 4	Refine the planning list based on employment size.
STEP 5	Group occupations closely related to one another. Add related occupations to the planning list as needed.
STEP 6	Rank occupations according to growth and projected job openings.
STEP 7	Refine the planning list based on the number of projected job openings.
STEP 8	Convert job titles for occupations on the planning list into D.O.T. and OES codes.
STEP 9	Refine the planning list based on educational and training requirements.
STEP 10	Refine the planning list based on wage data.
STEP 11	Arrange data collected into a chart.
STEP 12	Use the information!

Labor Market Information and Student Follow-up System

The process of labor market analysis is complex and time-consuming. In order to provide colleges with accurate information, the Chancellor's Office has funded a project known as the Labor Market Information and Student Follow-up System (LMI/SFS). This is a statewide system for collecting and disseminating information that can be used for vocational program planning, development, administration and improvement. The three basic components of the system are:

1. **Classroom surveys** to ask students about their status, including why they are attending vocational programs and classes.

2. **Labor Market Information reports** to help local colleges match the supply of trained students to the Employment Development Department's occupational demand forecasts in county areas.

3. **Student Follow-up** to ask students the result of their education/training.

The data and reports from the LMI/SFS are designed to help local colleges in the following areas:

- **Program Planning and Development** The information is a tool for determining the employment base and occupational demand for new and continuing occupational programs and classes.

- **Business and Economic Development** The system provides an information process to help employers in developing and maintaining their workforce, expanding and starting businesses.

- **Marketing Programs** The data and reports can be used to market programs to general public, students, elected officials and other agencies.

- **Career Planning, Student Services and Job Placement** The information base on employment trends and labor market demand serves counselors and other personnel working with students to develop career plans and identify employment opportunities.

- **Program Improvement** The system is a tool for collecting student and employer comments, which can be used to maintain and improve programs and classes.

- **Reports** The information provided meets many local, regional and state reporting needs.

- **Program Review and Evaluation** The system serves as a process to meet accountability and accreditation needs, and fulfills the requirements of statutes and regulations like the California Education Code and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act.

The data from LMI/SFS are intended to serve as benchmarks and estimates. Individual colleges are encouraged to add their own analyses and formulate their own conclusions, incorporating unique local trends and dynamics, as well as comments from employers, faculty, students, advisory committees, and community organizations.

Information on who to contact for more information on LMI/SFS appears at the end of this VERP.

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The Dean of Vocational/Occupational Education or Economic Development at your college can also be of assistance.

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